

Background:

TCDD received an appeal for a funding decision from Mounting Horizons, Inc. who submitted an application for the Leadership and Advocacy grant RFP. Per TCDD policy, an investigation has been conducted and a summary report prepared for review. The report was submitted to the Executive Committee within 30 days of the receipt of the appeal.

The following documents are included for review:

- **Copy of the Appeal Letter from Mounting Horizons, Inc.**
- **Summary Report of the Investigation**
- **Copy of TCDD Appeals Procedure**

The purpose of TCDD's Appeal Process is to ensure that TCDD procedures were followed, and that information provided in the original proposal was reviewed fairly and objectively. The process to appeal a funding decision is not designated as an opportunity for an applicant to provide additional information for consideration that could have been included in the original proposal. To do so would in essence create a two-stage review process that is not part of TCDD's current procedures.

The Executive Committee will be asked to make a final decision on this appeal.

Executive Committee — Agenda Item 9**Expected Action:**

The Executive Committee will consider this information and make a final decision on this appeal.

Council — Agenda Item 13. C.**Expected Action:**

The Council will receive a report on the Executive Committee decisions.

Mounting Horizons, Inc.

RECEIVED MAY 27
2018

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Perry Hunter
President and
CEO
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info@mountinghorizons.org

May 16, 2016

Beth Stalvey
620 I E. Oltorf, Suite 600
Austin, TX 78741 -7509

Dear Ms. Stalvey:

This letter is in response to the decision to not approve Mounting Horizons' proposal for the Leadership Development and Advocacy Training project. After careful consideration of the review panels' concerns, I would like to submit an appeal in response to the concerns they addressed below.

Concerns Noted by the Review Panel:

Concern 1: The proposed project appears to interrupt the school day to attend training.

Response 1: Mounting Horizons has partnerships already established with four school districts: Friendswood ISO, Galveston ISO, Clear Creek ISO, and Dickinson ISO for transition age students to participate in our transition programs. This partnership with TxDOT makes it possible for ten schools, close to 100 students to attend our Transition to Adulthood program on a weekly basis. Our transportation vehicles pick the youth up from their schools and bring them to our Centers to participate in programs.

This is a collaboration that was established in 2012 and has grown each year to include additional schools. The students that attend are 18 years and older and are part of a transition phase at their high schools or have already transitioned from regular school schedules to participate in transition programs. Next year we anticipate expanding to add additional school districts. The youth continue with this program throughout the summer so the project will be year-round. Attendance in the transition program is part of the transition planning for the youth so it's a natural part of their day to attend the trainings.

Concern 2: Mounting Horizons does not include persons with disabilities (youth) in the advisory committee.

Response 2: The following statement was included in the grant in regards to a Project Advisory committee, "At this time we do not have a Project Advisory Committee but we will form one to include transition teachers, OARS counselors, parents, and community organizers that have been active in the development of the youth transition program and continue to help us make that program successful." The concern is the committee does not include persons with disabilities, but many of the

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transition teachers, parents, and community organizers have disabilities and are active in advising our organization with regards to programs. We also have an active amount of "youth" or "young adults" that will be included in the committee but we felt that was a general expectation that they would have input in the program because they do every year as we expand and improve this program.

Concern 3: Clarification is needed about the involvement of self-advocates and families.

Response 3: Quarterly the youth will participate in trainings with family members/community members, etc. to continue to develop their self-advocacy skills and work on projects that they will be presenting to others. Ultimately the project includes others in the project for two reasons: 1). Improve their leadership and self-advocacy skills and use the trainings as a platform to show others they are working toward setting goals, community projects and taking an active role in their future. For example, goal setting is typically done without the youth's input but we want to shed light on that issue and provide opportunities for them to goal set with families which is a form of self-advocacy. 2). Working with self-advocates on community projects to make changes within their community. Again this is part of the quarterly trainings that will be the platform to work on projects to make changes within the community, such as transportation issues.

Concern 4: The proposal appears not to focus on opportunities to develop self-advocacy skills. The focus is to train family members and providers.

Response 4: The grant's first outcome is "Train approximately 150 young adults per year as we collaborate with school districts in Galveston and Harris counties to promote leaders that can advocate for themselves as they transition to adulthood." Throughout the grant we discussed that they will be obtaining self-advocacy training- learning what that means, practicing self-advocacy with their goal setting, working on self-advocacy projects so they gain the skills to self-advocate for themselves. This will be obtained in our year round Transition to Adulthood Program and during trainings with parents and community members. The participants will present their self-advocacy projects around the state so they continue to self-advocate and show others how to self-advocate. Most importantly they gain leadership skills as they learn the importance of self-advocacy and lead others in advocating for themselves.

Concern 5: Better phasing of objectives through the quarters would be helpful to understanding the overall objectives and outcomes.

Response 5: Below are the objectives of the project. Based on the project year each objective would phase in at a certain point in the project. As with all goals, there is a planning tool created to determine the timeline of objectives, outcome measures, and responsible staff members for all of our project goals. Objective 1: youth transition classes to include self-determination, disability awareness, advocacy and leadership (Objective 1 will occur year round where students are learning how to advocate. The classes are held weekly in small groups to develop the advocacy skills and then began the process of self-advocating for goals and/or advocating for change in the community or at the state level) 2: parent training and collaboration workshops, (Objective 2 will occur quarterly and participants will continue developing their advocacy skills in these trainings and collaboration workshops. The trainings are not for the parents but for the youth participants that are learning how to advocate. The parents are a part of the training so they can be aware of how advocacy is pivotal in their leadership development and to be supportive of this change. The trainings will

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occur during weekends and evenings during the year.) 3: attending and/or presenting at leadership and advocacy events, (Objective 3 will be at least once per year with the ultimate goal of youth having multiple opportunities to advocate and/or present at events. The timeline to phase this objective in is quarterly with participants working toward this during the transition classes and at trainings.) Objective 4: culminating summit to display newly developed leadership skills and showcase advocacy projects, (Objective 4 is a yearly summit that will build upon the knowledge gained in the transition classes, the trainings, and the advocacy events as a culminating activity.)

The four objectives of the project are listed based on a sequential phase in. For example, participants will begin learning advocacy in the transition classes, that will lead to their trainings and workshops with parents involved to continue the learning, next they are able to take those skills and learn and/or present at leadership/advocacy events, and lastly they develop a leadership summit to share with others regarding their advocacy and leadership projects they have been involved in during the year. This will bring together other youth and adults with disabilities to promote advocacy and show others how advocacy can affect change.

I sincerely hope that you will reconsider our Young Leaders Advocating for Change project. We know that it will not only affect change in the participants but will be a statewide initiative that can be a model that others can implement in their organizations. I am available to discuss the project further if you have additional questions. I can be reached at my office by phone 713-510-8755, ext. 705 or by email, phunter@mountinghorizons.org

Kindly,

Perry Hunter
President/CEO
Mounting Horizons, Inc.

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Mary Durham, Chair
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TO: Executive Committee Members
FROM: Beth Stalvey, Executive Director
SUBJECT: Review of Appeal: Mounting Horizons, Inc.
DATE: July 8, 2016

Mounting Horizons, Inc. submitted an application to receive grant funding under the Leadership Development and Advocacy Training Request for Proposals. The applicant submitted a proposal on October 28, 2015. The proposal was reviewed by an independent review panel on March 29, 2016. The reviewer comments and recommendations were presented to the Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities Executive Committee during the May 4, 2016 meeting.

The Executive Committee reviewed comments from the independent review panel and discussed comments and considerations. Following discussion, the Executive Committee did not approve funding for this proposal.

TCDD provided notice to Mounting Horizons about the funding decision on May 11, 2016, and included the Council's Process to Appeal a funding decision and a detailed summary of the review panel comments. TCDD received an appeal of the Council's funding decision from Perry Hunter, President/CEO of Mounting Horizons, Inc. within the 15 workdays allowed by the Council's Policy for an appeal of a funding decision. The Appeal Letter provided by Mounting Horizons is attached.

The appeal from Mounting Horizons asks TCDD to reconsider the decision to not approve funds for Leadership Development and Advocacy Training Project. In the Appeal letter, Mounting Horizons addresses each of the review panel concerns with the original grant proposal and provides information to clarify or respond to reviewer comments and recommendations. Much of this information was not provided in the original project proposal. We note that the purpose of the Council's Process to Appeal a funding decision is to ensure that TCDD procedures were followed, and that information provided in the proposal was reviewed fairly and objectively. The Process to Appeal is not designed as an opportunity to provide additional information for consideration when such information could have been included in the original proposal. To do so would in essence create a two-stage review process that is not part of TCDD's current procedures. A copy of the TCDD Appeals Procedure is attached. TCDD staff have reviewed the process followed to review the Mounting Horizons proposal for Leadership Development and Advocacy Training Project and find no concerns regarding any procedural matters. The information provided to the Executive Committee on the Executive Summary for the August discussion was found to be fair and objective, and followed TCDD policies and procedures for independent review.

Based on our review of this matter, we do not find evidence of any procedural concerns during the review process. And as noted earlier, much of the information provided by Mounting Horizons in this appeal was not provided in the original proposal. Considering additional information about the project at this time creates two-step review process that is not permissible by current Council approved procedures.

Attachments:

- Written Appeal from Mounting Horizons, Inc.
- TCDD Acknowledgement Letter
- TCDD Appeal Procedure

Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities

Council Policies

Section X. TCDD Grant Projects

I. Appeal of Funding Decisions

1. Appeals may be submitted from applicants for grants who did not receive funding or from grantees whose grants have not been awarded continuation funding. The person or entity appealing shall be known as the appellant.
2. Appeals of funding decisions shall be received, processed, and resolved with fairness and promptness.
3. The appellant shall file an appeal in writing addressed to the Executive Director. The written appeal must be postmarked within 10 workdays of the date of the written notice of suspension or within 15 workdays of the date of written notice of denial of new or continuation funding. The written appeal shall include all relevant facts and information that the appellant wishes to have considered as well as the proposed remedy being sought. The Executive Director will acknowledge receipt of the letter with a copy to the Executive Committee.
4. The Executive Director will investigate, compile, and study all relevant information about the appeal and, within 30 workdays of the receipt of the appellant's letter and submit a written report to the Executive Committee. The report will contain recommended action and the evidence supporting the recommended action.
5. The Executive Committee may approve the recommendations of the executive director, make such modifications as deemed appropriate, order further investigation, or take other appropriate action.
6. The decision of the Executive Committee is final.
7. Council staff shall notify the appellant of the final determination of the appeal.